

**ENFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2015**

A Special Meeting of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Kaupin in the Enfield Room of the Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut on Monday, June 15, 2015. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL-CALL –Present were Councilors Arnone, Deni, Edgar, Hall, Kaupin, Lee, Mangini, Stokes and Szewczak. Councilors Bosco and Cekala were absent. Also present were Town Manager, Matthew Coppler; Assistant Town Manager, Derrik Kennedy; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki; Town Attorney, Kevin Deneen; Director of Community Development, Peter Bryanton

ECDC PRESENTATION

Present for this item was Darin LaMore, President of the Enfield Community Development Corporation.

Mr. LaMore stated environmental work is nearly complete at 33 North River Street, and no significant environmental issues were found. He noted the State of Connecticut retained an architect to look at station designs. He stated they're proposing a much smaller footprint for the whole transit center than originally expected. He noted the area was measured and it appears they can build the platform as part of the structure so that everything is kept in the area of 33 North River Street. He stated the loading and unloading area has to be capable of unloading all cars at once, and this is a new safety requirement. He anticipated the platform will run the length of the building.

Mr. LaMore stated approximately 250 people take the bus from the mall parking lot to travel to Hartford. He noted if 10% of those people take the train, that amounts to only about 20 people, and the smaller transit center makes a little more sense.

As concerns the use of 33 North River Street, Mr. LaMore stated there are two components – the transit center, a coffee shop or office space on the first two floors with apartments on the top two floors. He noted they'll be going in two different directions as they seek funding.

Mr. LaMore then spoke about the Strand Theater. He noted they now have a signed agreement for the \$200,000 grant. He stated the Department of Economic Development (DECD) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was in Enfield Thursday to discuss this topic. He explained the first step is to get an access agreement to get into the building since Save Our Strand still currently owns that building. He noted they would then need to do a hazardous material survey and engineering study. He stated around the same time, they'll be putting together an RFQ for a market study, which will tell them the feasibility of what can be done with the Strand, i.e., what would make sense, what would make money and what would not make money. He noted the final goal is to have

something that sustains itself. He stated DECD and SHPO were excited and eager to see something happen. He pointed out one of the DECD's representatives that works on the grants and who will be helping with the RFQ and RFP's lives in Thompsonville, which is definitely a plus. He noted after this meeting, he bumped into the reps from DECD and SHPO at 33 North River Street because they were doing a little road tour, and they ended up spending another couple hours together going through 33 North River Street, the Strand and other things in the area. He stated DECD and SHPO pointed out Thompsonville has the population and features such as storefronts, a walkable area, a pond and a riverfront. He noted while Thompsonville has all those features, other towns have only one or two such features. He stated it is hoped they can keep DECD, SHPO and Enfield's State delegation interested in Enfield.

Mr. LaMore stated they will have a booth at the Fourth of July Celebration to garner interest in the revitalization of Thompsonville.

Councilor Hall questioned the status on the Strand turnover. Mr. LaMore stated the ECDC Board discussed and suggested they are not in a position to take over the Strand because of the costs involved. He noted DECD merely wants an access agreement to get into the building, which they apparently have. He stated it might be better if this building were in the hands of the Town as they move forward to get other funding. Mr. Coppler stated it might be best to get the environmental work done first.

Mr. LaMore stated Save Our Strand has donation money and other monies in accounts that the Secretary of State is holding onto, and they should look into what would need to be done to free up those monies.

Councilor Mangini questioned whether back taxes would be paid back to the Town of Enfield. Mr. Coppler stated back taxes would be addressed if the Town had to foreclose on the building.

Councilor Mangini stated her impression the Town taking possession of the Strand Theater is the best scenario for all parties, and Mr. Coppler stated it's not the best scenario, but he believes that's ultimately what's going to have to happen. He went on to note that Save our Strand has to re-incorporate to be able to give the Town the building and that will take time and money.

Councilor Arnone stated he is on the ECDC Board. He referred to the history with the Higgins building and noted he and Councilor Bosco agreed this building might have to be demolished. He feels this should be the last attempt to save this building.

Councilor Lee stated his belief Save Our Strand isn't capable of springing back up and leading this effort. He feels Save Our Strand should be filing the paperwork to re-incorporate for the purpose of dealing with the tax liens and turning the building over to a suitable partner. Councilor Arnone stated his belief the Town should proceed until they do.

Mr. Coppler stated the taxes are just an avenue that the Town could take to get control of the property.

Councilor Lee stated he doesn't want the Town moving so fast that they put the million dollar grant in jeopardy.

Councilor Arnone stated he'd like an update on the million dollar grant.

Councilor Lee stated the Town has waited 40 years for conditions to turn around to the point where they find Enfield in an enviable position to have a transit opportunity. He noted they waited around 20 years for the Bigelow project to happen. He stated most people in Enfield consider the Strand as a centerpiece of the village core. He feels the Town needs to demonstrate progress with this building, and they need to assist the private entity that the Town let languish without much support up until very recently. He stated they are building a case for success. He stated his belief there's value in staying the course.

Councilor Edgar stated his belief they're dragging their feet, and this has gone on too long. He noted the Strand is in worse shape than the Bigelow used to be. He noted Bigelow was kept up and there were functions in parts of that property. He stated his understanding Save Our Strand can pay up the back bills.

Councilor Edgar questioned how much money ECDC has, and Mr. LaMore stated for the Strand they have just the \$200,000 grant. He noted ECDC has no plans to go any further with any project, other than the engineering and marketing studies.

Councilor Edgar questioned what ECDC has for money, and Mr. LaMore responded definitely not enough to manage the Strand project. He noted right now, they have less than \$20,000 to put into that project.

Councilor Edgar questioned whether Mr. LaMore is still on the payroll, and Mr. LaMore responded yes.

Councilor Edgar stated his understanding ECDC has a defunct loan, and he questioned whether ECDC loaned money to Freshwater Package Store. Mr. LaMore responded yes, they signed paperwork and the owner passed away. He noted they have to go through the probate process.

Councilor Edgar questioned the collateral for the loan, and Mr. LaMore responded some of the equipment in the store, i.e., coolers and other things, but those items were taken, and they have not yet been able to learn where some of the equipment went.

Councilor Edgar questioned how much the loan was for, and Mr. LaMore responded \$15,000, and the loan is half forgivable, therefore, \$7,500 after it was half paid off could be forgiven. He noted the ECDC's attorney informed them that most likely the most they can expect to see is \$7,500. Councilor Edgar noted ECDC will have to pay that attorney's

fee, and Mr. LaMore stated they will attempt to get that money through probate to save on attorney fees. He went on to note he contacted the family, and the letter he received stated everything has to go through the probate system.

Councilor Edgar stated Councilor Arnone brought forward a list of questions for him that he put out after the special meeting at Parkman School, and he has not yet received a response. Mr. LaMore stated his impression he did answer those questions, and he will get those answers to Councilor Edgar.

Councilor Edgar stated at the Parkman special meeting, Mr. LaMore stated if they were at top performance, their payroll for the month would be \$1,875. He noted he would like that figure broken down as to “who, how and what”. Mr. LaMore indicated that can be done.

Chairman Kaupin requested Mr. LaMore provide all answers/information to Mr. Coppler, and Mr. Coppler will distribute that information to the full Council.

Councilor Szewczak referred to a comment about demolishing the Strand Theater. She stated her belief that as a community they need to define certain buildings that have historic significance. She noted she has been in that building with Councilor Lee, and it’s not falling down or in bad shape. She noted the inside of this building has character. She stated there’s nothing recognizable from old Thompsonville at this time. She noted other towns preserve their old buildings and storefronts. She pointed out the Hazardville Institute had a lot of support from the Hazardville community with huge donations and people paying for windows and other items. She stated her belief Save Our Strand hasn’t had the same privilege.

Chairman Kaupin questioned what ECDC will be doing over the next couple months. Mr. LaMore stated the focus is definitely on getting funding for 33 North River Street because they need to be ready for the end of 2016 when the trains should be stopping.

Mr. Kennedy stated Representative Alexander told him they are deciding when the special session will be, which will probably be the end of this month. He noted in that session, the money will be included for the Enfield train station and will be lumped with Windsor and Windsor Locks. He stated because the Governor decided on across the board cuts, even the train stations are affected. He noted what they originally anticipated was \$15 million, but rather it will be around \$13 million and that goes to Windsor, Windsor Locks and Enfield. He noted Rep. Alexander stated there would be reduced amenities at the train stations, however, he’s unsure what those amenities might be, and Rep. Alexander will work at restoring some of that funding that was taken away by the Governor’s cuts.

Chairman Kaupin questioned whether Mr. LaMore can provide answers to questions by the end of the week, and Mr. LaMore responded yes.

MOTION #3169 by Councilor Hall, seconded by Councilor Szewczak to go into Executive Session to discuss Personnel Matters, Pending or Threatened Litigation and Real Estate Negotiations.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #3169** adopted 9-0-0. The meeting stood recessed at 6:04 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Session of the Enfield Town Council was called to order by Chairman Kaupin at 6:05 p.m.

ROLL-CALL – Present were Councilors Arnone, Deni, Edgar, Hall, Kaupin, Lee, Mangini, Stokes and Szewczak. Also present were Town Manager, Matthew Coppler; Assistant Town Manager, Derrik Kennedy; Town Attorney, Kevin Deneen; Director of Human Resources, Steven Bielenda; Town Clerk, Suzanne Olechnicki

Personnel Matters, Pending or Threatened Litigation and Real Estate Negotiations were discussed with no action or votes being taken.

Chairman Kaupin adjourned the Executive Session at 7:02 p.m. He reconvened the Special Meeting at 7:03p.m. and stated during Executive Session, Personnel Matters, Pending or Threatened Litigation and Real Estate Negotiations were discussed with no action or votes being taken.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #3170 by Councilman Mangini, seconded by Councilman Hall to adjourn.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared **MOTION #3170** adopted 9-0-0, and the meeting stood adjourned at 7:04 p.m.